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MEMBERSHIP OF THE POLISH UNITED WORKERS' PARTY*

The Polish United Workers' Party, like the CPSU, has faced a dilemma in its attempts to control its growth.¹ The problem is in maintaining its leading, elite role while remaining fairly representative of the population, or at least of the working class. The difficulty in maintaining this balance has been compounded by the Party's changing image of itself and its role. The Party Statutes adopted at the Third Party Congress in 1959 defined the Party as "the vanguard of the working class, the highest form of its organization, the guiding force of the socialist revolution."² By 1971, the Party's special relationship to the working class was not considered as important. The PUWP was seen as "occupying a special place in the system of organization of Polish society" and striving for "optimal harmonization of the interests of the various classes and strata."³ Still, however, the working class continues to constitute the "social base of the party."⁴

The Party must keep itself reasonably small, in order to maintain its elite position. But it is also continuously seeking to expand its membership in areas where it feels it is weak (for example, among farmers) and among those sectors of society where it feels it should be heavily represented, such as teachers and trade union leaders. These two contradictory tendencies bring forth the necessity of the purge, which eliminates from the Party ranks the undesirables. As an authoritative study on the role of the Party admits, "the process of cleansing the Party is not, *and can never be*, completed."⁵

* This article was written in 1979 and revised slightly in 1981 with more recent data. The post-script was written in December 1981.

¹ For a discussion of this problem in the Soviet context, see Darrell Hammer, "The Dilemma of Party Growth," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XX, No. 4, July-August 1971, pp. 16-21; and T.H. Rigby, "Soviet Communist Party Membership Under Brezhnev," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3, July 1976, pp. 317-37.

² *III Zjazd Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej* (Third Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party), Warsaw, Książka i Wiedza, 1959, p. 1213.

³ *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy* (Political and Economic Yearbook), Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1971, p. 115.

⁴ *Nowe Drogi*, No. 1, January 1976, p. 35.

⁵ Ludwik Krasucki, *O kierowniczej roli Partii* (On the Leading Role of the Party), Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1959, p.48. Emphasis in the original.

Party Size

The Polish Workers Party (PPR—the communist party before its merger with the Socialists in 1948) grew tremendously in the months and years immediately following the war. From a base of less than 10,000 members during the war, and some 30,000 by the end of 1944, it grew to 235,000 at the end of 1945 and to over a million by December 1948. During that month, a "cleansing of the ranks" reduced the membership by some 60,000. The merger of the PPS and PPR into the Polish United Workers' Party brought the total membership to 1.4 million in 1949 (see Table 1).

Table 1
PPR and PUWP Members and Candidates 1945–1979
(in thousands)

Year	Members	Year	Members
July 1944	20.0	1959	1018.5
Dec. 1944	34.0	1960	1154.7
June 1945	207.0	1961	1306.2
Dec. 1945	235.3	1962	1397.0
June 1946	347.1	1963	1494.1
Dec. 1946	555.9	1964	1640.7
Dec. 1947	820.8	1965	1775.0
Dec. 1948	955.9	1966	1894.9
(before unification with PPS)		1967	1931.3
April 1949	1368.8	1968	2104.3
(after unification)		1969	2203.6
1950	1241.0	1970	2320.0
1951	1138.4	1971	2254.1
1952	1146.9	1972	2262.9
1953	1226.7	1973	2322.5
Feb. 1954	1296.9	1974	2363.9
1955	1343.8	1975	2436.9
1956	—	1976	2573.3
1957	1276.0	1977	2718.4
1958	1023.4	1978	2928.9
		1979	3079.2

Month is December unless otherwise specified.

Sources: Norbert Kołomejczyk, *PPR 1944–1945* (Polish Workers' Party 1944–1945), Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1965, p. 275; PZPR, Komitet Centralny, *PPR: Rezolucje, Odezwy, Instrukcje i Okólniki Komitetu Centralnego, I. 1946–I. 1947* (Polish Worker's Party: Resolutions, Instructions and Circulars of the Central Committee), Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1961, p. 212; A. Alster and J. Andrzejewski, "W sprawie składu socjalnego PZPR" (On the matter of the social composition of the PUWP), *Nowe Drogi*, No. 1, January 1951, pp. 236–9; *Trybuna Ludu*, March 12, 1954, p. 5; "Partia w liczbach" (The Party in Figures), *Nowe Drogi*, No. 6, June 1956, p. 102; *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy*, 1958–1960; *Rocznik Statystyczny*, 1962–1980; *Życie Partii*, no. 2, February 1980.

The Third Plenum of the PUWP Central Committee in November 1949 marked the end of the period of mass recruitment into the Party.⁶ Standardized methods of recruitment by the primary organizations were instituted, and the Party began to weed out some of the undesirable elements who had joined the Party during the period of open recruitment. As a result, by the end of 1951, the Party rolls had been reduced by over 200,000 members. According to one study, the heaviest toll in these purges of the early 1950s, in Poland as in the other European socialist states, was among the older, prewar party members, intellectuals, those of objectionable social origins, and those who "sought independence" from the central apparatus.⁷

Party membership policy in the following four years (1951-4) is not clear, though the number of members and candidates expanded steadily, almost reaching the 1949 size of 1.4 million by 1955. The return of Gomułka in October 1956 initiated a reversal of this trend. While the number of those purged from the Party in 1955 and 1956 averaged about 50,000, some 121,000 were dismissed from the Party in 1957. In the period from December 1957 to May 1958, a "verification" of party members resulted in the expulsion of over 200,000 members, amounting to sixteen percent of the total membership of the PUWP.⁸ By the end of the year, some 275,000 mem-

Table 2
PUWP Members and Candidates Who Left* the Party,
1948-1977

Year	Number	Year	Number
1948	60,000	1964	36,900
1950	24,000	1965	41,700
1954	53,607	1966	44,100
1955	58,904	1967	129,000
1956	48,000	1969	50,700
1957	121,000	1970	53,600
1958	276,000	1971	142,900
1959	87,878	1973	59,400
1960	27,906	1976	49,500
1961	34,428	1977	57,900
1963**	43,000		

* This includes those "crossed off" (*skreślono*) the Party lists, those "expelled" (*wykluczono*) from the Party, and those who died.

** Figures from 1963 on are estimates derived from annual data on Party membership and number of candidates accepted into the Party.

Sources: Alster, *loc. cit.*; *Nowe Drogi*, No. 6, June 1956, p. 102; *Trybuna Ludu*, January 16, 1960, p. 3; *Nowe Drogi*, No. 5, May 1961, p. 143; Richard F. Staar, *Poland 1944-1962*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962, p. 170.

⁶ Richard F. Staar, *Poland 1944-1962*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962, pp. 167-68.

⁷ Robert Bass, "East European Communist Elites: Their Character and History," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. XX, No. 1, January 1966, pp. 107-17.

⁸ *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy 1959*, p. 317.

bers had been dropped—the largest annual purge in the history of the Party. This verification was followed by an exchange of Party cards at the end of 1959, the first exchange since 1949. As a result of these purges, and the diminished recruitment in those years, the Party dropped to a little over a million members by the end of 1959 (see Table 2).

The cleansing of the ranks following Gomułka's return to power was complete by the end of 1959, and the Party began to rebuild. The year 1960 saw the largest influx of candidate members into the Party since 1948 (see Table 3). During the next six years, the Party grew steadily, with large numbers joining the Party each year, and a relatively small number being expelled.

This period of steady growth and outward calm in the Party was interrupted by the Party's problems of the late 1960s. An exchange of Party cards during 1967, aimed at "strengthening the leading role of the party or-

Table 3
Candidate Members Accepted into the PUWP,
and Their Social Origins, 1947–1977

Year	Candidates	Social Class (%)	
		Workers	Peasants
1947 (Jan.-June)	250,000	—	—
1948 (Jan.-July)	182,000	—	—
1950	53,630	54.4	23.7
1952	—	51.0	15.6
1953	—	54.9	14.7
1954	—	53.2	19.0
1955	123,843	50.6	14.6
1956	—	49.9	15.7
1957	9,500	42.9	8.8
1958	23,000	45.5	20.4
1959	86,000	55.0	14.0
1960	167,000	48.8	14.3
1961	196,675	47.0	15.6
1963	140,000	—	—
1965	176,000	—	—
1969	150,000	50.0	13.0
1970	170,000	51.0	14.0
1971	77,000	52.3	9.5
1973	119,000	54.2	12.5
1976	181,002	63.2	9.6
1977	202,953	60.5	9.6

Sources: Staar, *op. cit.*, p. 167; Alster, *op. cit.*, pp. 237; *Nowe Drogi*, No. 7, July 1957, p. 126 and No. 6, June 1956, p. 102; Gomułka, *op. cit.*, pp. 463–4; *Trybuna Ludu*, March 16, 1960; *Zwycię Parтии*, No. 4, April 1967, p. 27 and No. 4, April 1978; *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy*, 1961–1974

ganizations,"⁹ resulted in the dismissal of about 130,000 members from Party ranks. While details on Party growth for 1967 and 1968 are not known, the 1967 purge seems to have been only a temporary disturbance, as the Party continued to grow through 1970.

The disturbances of 1970, and the replacement of the Gomułka leadership, led to another purge of the Party membership, though not as extensive as during 1956-9. In 1971, some 143,000 Party members were dismissed, the largest number since 1958. That year, the Party declined in size for the first time since 1959. Though data on the size of the 1972 purge are not available, it probably was not as large as in 1971, and the Party grew slightly in that year. By 1973, the normal pattern of recruitment and expulsion seems to have been reestablished.¹⁰

The Party continued to grow very slowly, however, until 1976 and 1977, which saw the largest number of candidates accepted into the Party since 1947-1948. By 1977, the PUWP was the largest it had ever been, both numerically, and as a percent of the total population (7.6%), and of the adult population (10.8%). As will be seen below, this increase was a result of the intensive and successful drive to recruit more workers into the Party ranks in those years.

Social Structure

The PUWP, in maintaining itself as the leading and directing force of society, as well as the "vanguard of the working class," has had difficulties in maintaining a balance of social classes in its membership. The former role calls for bureaucrats and white collar workers; the latter for industrial workers. The Party recognizes this dilemma and keeps records of the social com-

Table 4
Population and Party by Social Class:
1950, 1960, 1970

Year	Group	Workers	Peasants	Social Class (Percent)	
				White Collar	Other
1950	Population	28.3	47.1	20.6	4.0
	PUWP Members	50.6	14.1	28.9	2.3
1960	Population	34.3	38.4	21.0	6.3
	PUWP Members	40.3	11.8	42.9	5.0
1970	Population	37.5	29.8	22.3	10.4
	PUWP Members	40.3	11.5	42.3	5.9

⁹ *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy* 1968, p. 144.

¹⁰ The Sixth Party Congress in December 1971 added a new feature to Party membership policy by requiring "rozmowy" (conversations) with one third of the Party members every year. See *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy* 1973, p. 129.

position of the total membership, of the new candidates and of those who leave the Party. The problem in maintaining social class balance has been a threefold one. First, the percentage of workers in the Party has steadily declined over the years, while the working class element in the population has grown. The second problem, concomitant to the first, is the disproportionately large and steadily growing representation of white collar workers in the Party. The third problem, and probably the least tractable, is the very low representation of farmers in the Party.

The representation of the working classes has received the most attention in the Party press. The Party has frequently called for increases in working class membership, even though the workers have been overrepresented in the Party in comparison to their numbers in the Polish population¹¹ (see Table 4). But worker representation in the Party has not kept pace with the growth of the working class—thus the concern of the Party leadership.

The problem is obvious from an examination of the statistics on the social composition of the PUWP membership (see Table 5). While the percentage of workers in the population increased during the postwar years, the working class percentage of the Party declined steadily from almost 65% in 1946 to under 40%. Though this official figure of 40% is low, it is probably somewhat inflated to suggest that there are more actual workers in the Party than their numbers indicate. A more detailed breakdown of the social composition of the Party for 1958 elucidates this.¹² First of all, the figures normally given for "workers" include "agricultural workers" who might more accurately be grouped with the "farmers." If these two groups are separated, the percentage of non-agricultural workers in the Party in 1958 drops from 41.8% to 37.3%. Further, if one considers only workers "involved directly in production," their proportion of the Party membership drops to 25.6%. This suggests that in Poland, as in the USSR, the Party often defines a member as a "worker" even after he has moved from a blue collar occupation into a white collar one.

Before 1960, the Party leadership frequently referred to the necessity for more workers in the Party. In a speech to the Central Committee Plenum in November 1949, for example, Bierut called for 90% of future recruits to be workers and peasants.¹³ In the 1960s and early 1970s, perhaps because of

¹¹ This contrasts with the Soviet Union, where workers consistently have been underrepresented in the CPSU. In 1959–1961, workers were approximately 48% of the population, and only 34% of the CPSU. See T.H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R., 1917–1967*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 414.

¹² Krasucki, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49.

¹³ For other examples of the Party leadership's concern with the social composition of the Party, see Bierut's report to the Second Party Congress in *Trybuna Ludu* (March 12, 1954) and Gomułka's speech at the Third Congress in his *O naszej Partii* (On Our Party), Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1968, pp. 463–64.

Table 5
Social Composition of the PUWP, 1945-1979

Year	Social Class (Percent)			
	Workers	Peasants	Mental Workers	Others
1945	61.0	28.1	10.7	—
1946	64.7	23.2	9.3	2.8
1947	57.7	21.6	14.1	6.6
1948	53.6	21.3	17.6	2.3
1949	55.9	14.7	26.7	—
1950	50.6	14.1	28.9	2.3
1952	48.2	13.4	36.2	2.2
1954	48.1	13.8	36.2	2.0
1956	44.6	12.8	39.5	3.1
1958	41.8	12.2	42.1	3.9
1960	40.3	11.8	42.9	5.0
1962	39.8	11.5	43.7	5.0
1964	40.2	11.4	43.0	5.4
1968	40.2	11.4	43.0	—
1970	40.3	11.5	42.3	5.9
1972	39.6	10.1	43.9	6.4
1973	39.4	10.2	44.2	—
1975	41.8	9.5	41.8	6.9
1976	44.9	9.3	—	—
1977	45.6	9.3	34.3	10.8
1979	46.2	9.4	33.0	11.4

Data for most years is for December.

Sources: Kołomejczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 275; PZPR, *op. cit.*; Alster, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-54; "Liczby dotyczące składu Partii" (Figures Concerning the Composition of the Party), *Nowe Drogi*, No. 7, July 1957, pp. 125-7; *Życie Partii*, No. 10, October 1968, and Nos. 1, 4, January and April 1978; *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy*, 1958-1977; *Życie Partii*, 1980, no. 2, p. 14.

the persistent and seemingly insoluble nature of the problem, the top Party leaders less frequently mentioned it.

After the Sixth Party Congress in 1971, however, there was a renewed effort to increase the proportion of workers in the Party. Despite these efforts and an accelerated rate of recruitment of workers into the Party (Table 3), the percentage of workers among the total Party membership continued to decline, reaching an all-time low of 39% by 1973 (Table 5). An exchange of Party cards in 1975¹⁴ did manage to reverse this decline. But the results were apparently considered insufficient, and there were renewed calls to strengthen the representation of workers at the Seventh Party Congress in December 1975, and especially after the June 1976 workers' protests against

¹⁴ The new cards contained much more information on the past and present Party activities for the holder.

food price increases. Thus in 1976, fully 63% of the newly recruited members were workers, by far the highest proportion in the Party's history.

The campaign continued through 1977, with intensive and successful efforts to recruit workers. As the Party monthly noted, "the constant strengthening of the position of the Party among the working class is a factor of decisive importance in the realization of the political line and the program of the Party."¹⁵ The Party leadership seemed genuinely interested in strengthening the links and improving communications between the leadership and the workers. Bringing more workers into the Party was the primary mechanism for doing this.

The difficulty in maintaining a representative proportion of workers in the Party seems to be due more to the tendency of workers to leave the Party than to the Party's inability to recruit members from this stratum. As Table 3 demonstrates, the percentage of the new candidates who are workers has been much higher than their representation of the total membership. Since the percentage of workers among the new recruits was 45% for most years from 1957 to 1975 while their representation in the total membership did not exceed 40%, it is clear that the workers were not staying in the Party once they were recruited. It will be interesting to see if the Party can hold on to the massive working class recruits since 1975.

The supposition that workers are more likely to leave the Party due to lack of interest or disillusionment is strengthened by some data on those who do leave the Party. In 1960, while only 31% of those "expelled" from the Party were workers, over 53% of those "crossed off" the Party lists (for failure to pay dues, transfer party organizations, etc.) were workers. White collar workers, in contrast, were much more likely to be "expelled" than "crossed off." Of those expelled, almost 60% were white collar workers in 1960, while only 24% of those crossed off the lists were in that social class.¹⁶

The Party's policy to increase the proportion of workers in its organization inevitably focusses attention on the overrepresentation of white collar workers in the Party. While this stratum has never constituted more than a quarter of the population, it made up over forty percent of the PUWP from 1957 to 1975.¹⁷ This problem derives from the tendency of the Party, as the "leading" organization, to attract and promote leaders, organizers, and bureaucrats, who generally hold white collar jobs.

¹⁵ "Jak umacniała się partia w bieżącym roku?" (How was the Party strengthened this year?). *Zycie Partii* (Party Life), No. 11, November 1977, p. 7.

¹⁶ "Stan liczebny oraz rozmieszczenie członków i kandydatów PZPR," (The numerical composition and distribution of members and candidates of the PUWP), *Nowe Drogi*, No. 5, May 1961, p. 143. For similar data for 1956, see *Trybuna Ludu*, March 3, 1957, p. 3.

¹⁷ In the Soviet Union, white collar workers are even more dominant in the Party, with almost 50% of the membership in that category. See Rigby, *Communist Party Membership*, loc. cit.

The decline in the percentage of workers in the Party was accompanied by, and in fact caused by, the steady growth in the proportion of white collar workers in the Party ranks. The percentage of white collar workers rose from 9% in 1946 to 43% in 1959, and remained about 43% through 1973. In the years after 1973, the Party did not always report the percentage of white collar workers in its membership. This was during the intensive campaign to recruit workers, and reflected the sensitivity of the party to the fact that "mental workers" constituted so large a part of the organization. When figures finally were reported again in 1978, white collar workers had dropped to 34% of the Party membership, the lowest representation since 1950. Much of this decline was due to the increased proportion of workers from 1974 to 1977. But there appears to be some juggling of the statistics as well, in an effort to depress this figure. The percentage for "other" social classes in the Party, for example, jumped from 6% to almost 11% from 1972 to 1977, suggesting that many of the white collar Party members were shunted into this group.

The dominance of the white collar workers in the Party is even more evident from a look at the membership of all the District (Gromadzkie) Party Committees in the country. The "mental workers" constitute 57% of the membership of these committees, and 82% of the positions of first secretary. The source for these data also indicates that teachers are an especially big group in both categories, constituting a *fifth* of all district committee members and over a third of the first secretaries.¹⁸

The biggest problem for the PUWP, however, has been in the representation of farmers in the Party. In 1950, with almost half of the population engaged in agricultural work, peasants constituted only 14% of the Party membership. By 1970, the percentage of farmers in the Party had declined to 11%, and has dropped steadily since then to 9%. The problem is especially acute among private farmers; according to a recent Party source, for every 1,000 such farms, there were only 73 members and candidate members of the Party.¹⁹

Part of this decline is due to the gradual reduction in the agricultural population. But the substantial under-representation of farmers in the Party stems mostly from the reluctance of religious landowning peasants to join an atheistic and collectivizing organization.

With the workers, as seen above, the problem was not so much in recruiting them into the Party, but in keeping them there once they had joined. With the peasants, the problem is a different one. Not only does the Party

¹⁸ *Życie Partii*, No. 11, November 1969, p. 14.

¹⁹ Krystyn Dąbrowa, "Potrzeby i możliwości poprawy rozmieszczenia sił Partii," (The needs and possibilities of improving the distribution of Party forces), *Życie Partii* No. 10, October 1977, pp. 2-3.

have trouble keeping farmers in the Party, it does not seem able to get them to join in the first place. As Table 3 demonstrates, the Party has trouble attracting enough peasants to the Party to bring their proportion among the candidates up to even 15%. The exceptions to this seem to be the years of the Polish thaw, when Gomułka returned and allowed the decollectivization of the farms.

The tension between the desire to recruit workers and farmers and the necessity of attracting to the Party the leading elements of society is evident from the concentration of Party members among various occupational groups. In 1968, less than 13% of all workers and farmers belonged to the Party. At the same time 40% of all engineers belonged, 36% of all technicians, 41% of the teachers (up from 20% in 1960), 33% of the scientists, and 17% of all doctors and pharmacists. While the Party has included in its ranks only about 10% of the adult population, almost 20% of those with a higher education belonged to the Party (in 1962).²⁰

Education

Part of the Party's problem in trying to increase the number of workers and peasants in its membership is that it is also trying to attract to its ranks

Table 6
Education of PUWP Members and Candidates,
Selected Years, 1951-1978

Year	Higher	Middle*	Highest Level of Education (Percent)	
			Complete Elementary**	Incomplete Elementary
1951	2.0	13.5	42.6	41.9
1953	2.3	14.6	42.2	40.9
1955	3.1	17.2	41.9	37.8
1958	4.6	19.0	44.9	31.5
1961	5.7	20.5	50.0	23.8
1965	6.5	23.2	54.2	16.1
1968	7.2	25.8	55.6	11.4
1971	8.6	28.2	54.6	8.6
1973	9.6	29.5	53.2	7.7
1976	10.9	31.2	52.8	5.1
1978	12.0	32.5	51.6	3.9

* Includes incomplete higher education.

** Includes incomplete middle education.

Sources: "Partia w Liczbach," *op. cit.*, p. 105; "Stan Liczebny," *op. cit.*, p. 143; *Kalendarz Robotniczy 1963* (Worker's Calendar). Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1962, p. 39; *Rocznik Statystyczny*, volumes for 1968-1980.

²⁰ These data were gathered from the following sources: *Kalendarz Robotniczy 1961* (Worker's Calendar), Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1960, pp. 98-99; *Kalendarz Robotniczy 1963*, pp. 98-99; T. Palimaka, "Nasza Partia" (Our Party), *Życie Partii*, No. 10, October 1968, p. 4; *Rocznik Polityczny i Gospodarczy 1970*, p. 171.

the leading members of society. These leaders are often the most educated and, consequently, the most likely to have white collar backgrounds and occupations. In this enterprise, the Party has been quite successful.

As Table 6 shows, the percentage of Party members with a higher education has grown by six times since 1951, while the percentage of those with less than an elementary education has dwindled from about 42% in 1951 to 4% in 1978. While the percentage of Party members with a higher education has steadily increased since 1951, the most rapid advances occurred in the years 1956–1958 and 1970–1972. This suggests that the change in Party leadership may attract intellectuals to the Party, at least temporarily. By 1976 the Party was quite well educated, with over 40% of the membership having completed at least a secondary education.

The increasing level of education in the Party was due in part to the increased educational level for the whole population. But until 1976 the rise in the educational level of the party proceeded much faster than did the increased education for the population. As Table 7 illustrates, the educational gap between Party and non-Party members increased significantly over those years. In 1955, a Party member was twice as likely to have a higher education as a non-Party person; by 1976, he was three times more likely to have such an education. After 1976, the gap narrowed somewhat, suggesting that fewer highly educated people were joining the party. But by the 1970s, education was indeed an important factor in mobility into, and within, the PUWP.

Table 7
Percentage of PUWP and Polish Population With
Complete Higher Education, 1955–1978

Group	Year				
	1955	1960	1970	1976	1978
Population*	1.5	2.1	2.7	3.6	4.5
PUWP Members	3.1	5.3	7.9	10.9	12.0

* Population fifteen years of age and above

As with social class, the educational level of the Party poses a dilemma for its leadership, and has important consequences for its future. The Party does want to incorporate the best people into the Party, and as the society and economy becomes more complex, the educational level of Party members inevitably will increase. The Party needs these people to help direct political, social, and economic development. At the same time, the Party wants to maintain close ties with the ordinary Pole, who is not so highly educated. As Frederick Frey has pointed out in his discussion of the Turkish political elite, the effectiveness of the leadership is largely dependent on the extent to which it is representative of the lower political bodies, and the population at large. If it is too much differentiated from the population, it loses

touch with the governed. If it is completely undifferentiated, it may not possess the skills and qualities necessary for leadership.²¹

Age

The Party has also had trouble in recruiting young people. The percentage of Party members who were under the age of 25 was quite high between 1954 and 1956 (see Table 8), but it dropped dramatically in the next few years. This became a matter of concern to the leadership, with warnings that "the Party must begin to replenish its ranks with young people."²² A campaign to recruit more young people, begun in 1959, managed to bring some back into the Party. After the accession of Gierek in 1970, however, as after Gomułka's return in 1956, the percentage of young people dropped off sharply, reaching a twenty-year low in 1973. This led to a campaign after 1976 to recruit more youth into the party coinciding with the effort to attract more workers. This did reverse both the decline in the percentage of young people in the Party, and the overall aging of the Party membership that occurred during the early 1970s.

Table 8
Age of PUWP Members and Candidates,
Selected Years, 1954-1978

Year	Percent in Age Groups:				
	Under 25	25-29	30-39	40-49	Over 50
1954	14.5	—	—	—	16.6
1955	15.9	—	—	—	17.4
1956	13.0	—	—	—	—
1957	10.0	—	—	—	—
1958	6.8	—	—	—	—
1960	8.6	17.4	33.8	18.7	21.5
1965	9.0	15.9	33.7	21.6	19.8
1967	9.5	14.8	33.3	23.5	18.9
1968	10.9	14.5	32.6	23.9	18.1
1970	11.1	14.2	31.3	25.2	18.2
1971	9.2	14.3	30.8	26.5	19.2
1973	5.6	14.8	28.8	28.2	22.6
1976	5.7	15.4	27.4	27.5	24.0
1978	7.8	15.7	27.6	25.5	23.4

Sources: "Partia w liczbach," *op. cit.*; W. Titkow, "Niektóre problemy rozwoju Partii" (Several Problems of the Development of the Party), *Nowe Drogi*, No. 12, December 1958, p. 88; Krasucki, *op. cit.*, p. 49; *Rocznik Statystyczny*, volumes for 1968-1980.

²¹ Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965, p. 171.

²² Krasucki, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

The young's lack of enthusiasm for the party is also evident from their membership in the communist youth organizations, the ZMS (Union of Socialist Youth) and the ZMW (Union of Rural Youth). For those in their early twenties, membership in these organizations is a requisite for entry into the PUWP. Yet in 1960, only 11% of all university students belonged to the ZMS, and only 3.8% to the ZMW. Even more telling, the number of students in these organizations declines as they continue their education. While almost 18% of first year university students belonged to one of these organizations in 1960, only 9% of those in their final year belonged.²³

Conclusions

The Polish United Workers' Party, like all communist parties, has a problem in trying to maintain two roles: that of a leading organization that represents the best of society; and that of an organization well represented in all parts of Polish society. When it concentrates on the former, by drawing into its ranks the political and educational elite, it jeopardizes the latter role. When it has tried to become more representative of, and represented in, Polish society, the size of the Party increases and threatens its elite image and role.

The Party has not been well represented among farmers and young people, and has had difficulty maintaining an adequate proportion of workers. The highly educated and white collar workers have been overrepresented consistently, threatening to isolate the Party from the masses. Membership growth and policies have been cyclical, with each cycle initiated by succession to the position of Party First Secretary, in 1948, 1956, and 1970. Prior to each of these successions, the Party had grown substantially. With the change in leaders came a purge, and then resumption in growth. It might be suggested that the larger the Party, the more likely will there be challenges to the Party leadership. With a change, of course, the new leader wishes to reconstitute the Party to insure its obedience to him.

If an overly large Party is a problem for the leadership, however, so is an inadequately representative one. Party members serve as the main link between the leadership and the population. After each of the revolts in Poland, in 1956, 1970, and 1976, the Party leadership has tried to strengthen these links by expanding membership among workers and peasants. The effort has not always been successful. But in the most recent campaign, following the 1976 disturbances, an unprecedented number of workers have been brought into the Party. The inevitable effect of this, though, has been to expand the membership rolls to their largest ever. This once again poses the question of whether the PUWP, with so large a membership, can maintain its elite role, and control disaffection within its ranks.

²³ "Stan liczebny," *op. cit.*, pp. 138-39.

Postscript

This article was written in 1979, well before the upheavals in the summer of 1980 and since. These disturbances have put unprecedented strains on the PUWP and caused major changes in the composition, organization and outlook of that Party. The trends in Party membership and composition mentioned above continued in the years 1978 through early 1980. As the Party's campaign to make its membership more representative continued through those years the percentage of workers, youth, and women in the Party increased even further. By 1979, the last year for which Party membership data has been reported, the percentage of workers in the party was the highest since 1954, of young people, the highest since 1971, and of women, the highest ever (26.8%).

The inevitable consequence of this was that the party had grown to its largest size ever, even as a percent of the population. By 1979, the Party constituted 11.9% of the adult population, 8.7% of the total population, and 20.5% of those employed in the socialized economy.²⁴ As was the case in 1948, 1956 and 1970, this rapid growth in Party membership was followed by rebellion and a change in leadership.

The disturbances of 1980 were not, of course, caused simply by the growth in Party membership, but this was certainly one of the factors that contributed to those events. The Party's determination to expand its membership no doubt led to a relaxing of criteria for Party entry, and consequently to the inclusion of many "opportunists." The popular perception of the Party as being rife with corruption was probably even more true in the later 1970s than it had been earlier. The other consequence of expanding Party rolls (noted above) was the tendency of the Party to lose the élan, qualities, and image of a leading organization as the membership became increasingly large.

The lack of confidence in the Party was one of the primary themes of the surveys conducted by the intellectuals of the "Experience and the Future" group in 1979 and 1980. As one respondent in this survey noted, ideological arguments and motivations in the leadership had declined, leaving power and its benefits as the overriding motive. This, of course, simply reinforced the divisions between the Party and society.²⁵

The collapse of the Party's perceived integrity is even more evident from some of the public opinion survey data on trust in institutions that have been reported in the Polish press. A poll conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Research (OBOP) of Polish Radio and Television showed the Catholic

²⁴ "Portret Partii," *Życie Partii*, no. 2, February 1980, p. 14.

²⁵ *Poland Today: the State of the Republic*, compiled by the "Experience and the Future" Discussion Group, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1981, p. 17.

Church, Solidarity, and the army, in that order, as the most trusted institutions in Poland. At the very bottom of the list, in fifteenth place, was the Polish United Workers' Party.²⁶ A similar poll conducted later among Solidarity members in the Mazowsze region showed a similar ranking: Solidarity had the confidence of 95% of the respondents; the Church, 93%; the Army, 68%. The Party, again at the bottom of a list of fourteen institutions, was trusted by only 7% of the respondents.²⁷

The erosion of trust in the Party was accompanied by apparently massive defections from that organization. The scope of this is difficult to judge, since the Party has released no data on the size or composition of the Party since February 1980. This is contrary to the usual practice of annual or semi-annual reports, and suggests that the data are too unreliable, or too sensitive, for public release. But the decline in the size and ideological fervor of the Party membership is evident from fragmentary data on Party members who are also in Solidarity, or who adhere to the Church.

Various estimates suggest that in January of 1981, between 1.4 and 1.7 million of the Party's three million members were also members of Solidarity.²⁸ Even at the Party's Ninth Congress in July 1981, it was reported that 20% of the delegates were also Solidarity members.²⁹

It is likely that many of those Party members who joined Solidarity eventually let their Party memberships lapse. In the Mazowsze poll of Solidarity members, 11% of the respondents also belonged to the Party compared to almost 17% (i.e. one sixth) from the national poll earlier in the year. If the Mazowsze poll is representative of the nation as a whole, and accounting for the growth of Solidarity during 1981, this suggests that at least a quarter of the Party members who had joined Solidarity had left the Party between the beginning and the end of 1981. This is not surprising, given the low level of confidence in the Party by Solidarity members; in fact, more of the Mazowsze Solidarity members *belonged* to the Party (11%) than *trusted* it (7%).

The other institution competing for the loyalty of Poles is the Catholic Church. While most Poles are Catholics, the Party has heretofore maintained that involvement in both the Church and the Party is incompatible. Yet several articles in the Polish press have asserted that two-thirds or more members of the Party are also believers.³⁰ The growing awareness of this phe-

²⁶ *Kultura* (Warsaw), June 21, 1981, p. 2.

²⁷ *Tygodnik Solidarność*, November 20, 1981, p. 3.

²⁸ The lower figure is derived from a public opinion poll reported in *Kultura* (Warsaw), March 1, 1981, in which it was stated that approximately one sixth of Solidarity's 8½ million members also belonged to the PUWP. The higher figure was reported by Elizabeth Pond in the *Christian Science Monitor*, January 28, 1981, p. 9.

²⁹ *New York Times*, July 20, 1981, p. 5.

³⁰ See, for example, the claim of Stefan Bratkowski in *Życie Warszawy*, December 1, 1980, and a rebuttal in January 8, 1981.

nomenon, in combination with defections from the Party ranks, prompted the Party to directly address the question of "Believers in the Party" in the Party biweekly, and to allow that religion is a "private matter" and that believers may join the Party. As necessary as this move may have been to stem the tide, it can only result in a further erosion of the Party's *raison d'être*.

The erosion of the membership of the Party and of trust in the organization contributed to the Party's inability to cope with the economic and political crisis in the country. In frustration with this, in December 1981 Solidarity's national leadership finally called for a national referendum on whether the Party should continue its rule. Prime Minister Jaruzelski's response was to declare martial law and replace the government and Party leadership with military rule, which was promised to be temporary. The crackdown on Solidarity was largely intended to preempt more direct Soviet involvement in Poland. The military, at least, was a much more popular institution than either the Party or the Government. Jaruzelski may have felt that the military could more effectively lead the country through the upcoming winter than the Party could.

These were extraordinary developments. For the first time since the establishment of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, a communist party was no longer in control. The "leading role of the Party" had been the *sine qua non* for political rule in these countries, especially from the Soviet point of view. The effect of this on the Polish United Workers' Party, as on all the East European parties, is bound to be momentous.